

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	
Project Name: Big Flat underground power line.	Proposed Implementation Date: Summer 2020
Proponent: Big Flat Electric Cooperative, PO Box 229, Malta, MT 59538	
Type and Purpose of Action: The applicant proposes to install an underground power line within a right-of-way 20' wide (10' on either side of a centerline) across School Trust land in Phillips County. This line will be "knifed in" (entrenched using machinery that requires very little digging, usually a line about 12" wide at most) and used to provide power to TransCanada's Keystone XL Pumpstation. The line will allow for improved electric power distribution in this rural area and the surrounding communities.	
Location: NW4NW4 Section 9, Township 37N, Range 32E	County: Phillips

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	
1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	Big Flat Electric contacted the Glasgow Unit regarding the project and submitted the right-of-way application.
2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	No other governmental agencies have jurisdiction over this project as it pertains to School Trust lands. Montana DNRC, Real Estate Management Bureau has jurisdiction over the project.
3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	<p>Action Alternative: Grant permission to the proponent to install the underground power line on School Trust land.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Deny permission to the proponent to install the underground power line on School Trust land.</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS

## II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

<p>4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compatible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>The area of impact consists of Scobey clay loam with 0 to 4% slopes. This soil is not fragile or unstable, and no unusual geologic features are present.</p> <p>Action Alternative: There would be some soil disturbance due to the digging (knifing) required to install the line underground. Any disturbance will be covered by the pump station site to be placed on the site.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no changes to soils on the School Trust land.</p>
<p>5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?</p>	<p>There are no important water resources present within the area of impact. There is no potential for impact on drinking water in the area.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The proposed cable installation would not negatively impact the quality, quantity and distribution of water.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, there will be no impacts to water quality, quantity and distribution.</p>
<p>6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?</p>	<p>This project is not influenced by any air quality regulations or zones. A short-term increase in vehicle traffic will result in a slight increase in dust. No pollutants will be produced.</p> <p>Action Alternative: This type of project on the School Trust land will have minimal impact to the air quality. Some dust may occur due to vehicle use.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to air quality.</p>

## II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?

The area of impact is cropland that is seeded and harvested annually or semi-annually. No rare plants or cover types are present.

Action Alternative: The site is permitted to be used as a pump station for TransCanada's Keystone XL line and will see permanent destruction of the current vegetation. The site will presumably be a graveled pad.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the plant communities on the School Trust land.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?

The area of impact may see occasional use by antelope, deer and upland/grassland birds.

Action Alternative: The area of impact will no longer provide habitat for wildlife once the project is completed and the area is a pump station site.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the possible use of the School Trust land as wildlife habitat.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern?

The area of impact is cropland that provides minimal habitat for wildlife species. No wetlands are within the area of impact. This project is within General Greater Sage-Grouse habitat as outlined by the Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team (MSGOT). The proponent submitted the project to MSGOT for review prior to submitting the application, and received approval, along with guidelines to follow, back from MSGOT. The following species of concern are listed as being at least seasonally present within the area of impact: Swift Fox, Sprague's Pipit, Ferruginous Hawk, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Baird's Sparrow, Long-billed Curlew and McCown's Longspur.

## II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Action Alternative: By following the recommendations made by MSGOT, impacts to sage-grouse will be mitigated during and after the installation process. Any other impacts will be negligible, as the area is already permitted to be a pump station site after installation of this line.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the environmental resources.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?

The area of impact contains no historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

Action Alternative: The proposed line will have no impact on historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

No Action Alternative: There will be no impact to historical or archaeological sites under this alternative.

11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?

The area of impact is near a county road and visible to the public. However, the proposed power line would be buried underground and not visible upon installation.

Action Alternative: The site will be permanently altered as a pump station servicing the Keystone XL pipeline will be installed.

No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to aesthetics associated with the School Trust land.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?

Environmental resources in the area are not specifically limited and are not affected by the proposed project. No nearby activities will affect the project.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
	<p>Action Alternative: The proposed project will place no additional demands on any environmental resources in the area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no demands placed on environmental resources of land, water, air or energy.</p>
13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?	<p>This site is permitted to house a pump station servicing the Keystone XL pipeline, which runs directly adjacent to the site.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Installation of this line is crucial to the installation of TransCanada's Keystone XL pump station.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the plans or studies that Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation has on the School Trust land.</p>

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	<p>The operation and movement of heavy equipment and vehicles has inherent risks that are not impacted by access across the School Trust land.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The installation of the line would require the use of heavy equipment.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to human health or safety.</p>
15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	<p>The area of impact is cropland that is leased by a neighboring farmer. It will eventually be a graveled pad and pump station site.</p>

	<p>Action Alternative: There will be a reduction of the farmable acreage on this tract after installation of the pump station.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to agricultural activities on the School Trust land.</p>
16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not create nor impact any jobs in the area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to quantity and distribution of employment under this alternative.</p>
17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	<p>Action Alternative: The project will have no impacts on the local and state tax base and tax revenues.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the local and state tax base under this alternative.</p>
18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?	<p>Action Alternative: The project will increase traffic along the nearby county road during installation. There would be no additional demand for governmental services.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no additional demand for government services.</p>
19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	<p>There are no special management plans in effect on the School Trust land. It is managed for installation of a pipeline pump station.</p> <p>Action Alternative: The project has cleared State (DNRC) management plans.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to locally adopted environmental plans and goals.</p>
20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF	The area of impact is near a county

<p>RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?</p>	<p>road and easily accessible to the public. However, it has little recreational value due to the proximity of the road and lack of quality habitat.</p> <p>Action Alternative: No changes to public land access or recreational potential would occur.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the recreational values associated with the School Trust land under this alternative.</p>
<p>21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not impact the density and distribution of population and housing.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the density and distribution of population and housing.</p>
<p>22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not disrupt the traditional lifestyles of the local community.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the social structures under this alternative.</p>
<p>23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not impact the cultural uniqueness and diversity of this rural area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the cultural uniqueness and diversity under this alternative.</p>
<p>24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:</p>	<p>This power line is intended to provide power to a pump station site being installed by TransCanada to service the adjacent Keystone XL pipeline.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Allowing installation of the line across School Trust land would have little economic impact to the School Trust, but would allow for operation of the pump</p>

